

TALKING POINTS FOR SB269

The emergency department setting is particularly vulnerable to violence because of the 24-hour accessibility of the department to the public and an overall stressful environment for the patients we provide care to. This stress extends to the patients family and friends.

Emergency care services are perceived to be a public entitlement by many. Healthcare workers are often empathetic to the frustration and vulnerability of the patients and visitors, and violence is frequently considered to be just part of the job. Getting assaulted while providing care should never be considered part of the job.

Billings Clinic Emergency Department sees 40,000 patients per year. The vast majority of these go without violence, however, our staff have been subject to physical violence on many occasions. I, Brad Von Bergen RN, have personally been kicked, punched, spit on, hit, and had a wheel chair thrown at me. One of my co-workers has had a knife held to her throat. Another was kicked so hard he was knocked unconscious. These things happened as we provided care to the patient.

A report from the OSHA indicated that 48% of all nonfatal injuries from occupational assaults and violent acts occurred in healthcare and social service settings.^[1]

Nurses are the most likely of all healthcare workers to be assaulted.

In a recent survey of 3465 members of the Emergency Nurses Association, more than 50% of respondents reported that they had experienced physical violence (being spit on, hit, pushed or shoved, scratched, or kicked).

The Joint Commission reported that its Sentinel Event Database, which includes a category that combines assault, rape, and homicide, has received 256 reports of this nature since 1995, a number that is probably lower than the actual number of incidents, because violent crimes in healthcare facilities are known to be underreported. Even without accurate statistics, the category "assault, rape, and homicide" is consistently among the top 10 types of sentinel events, and the Joint Commission has seen steady increases in reports of these violent crimes in healthcare facilities, with the greatest number of reports in the past 3 years: 36 incidents in 2007, 41 in 2008, and 33 in 2009.^[3]

References

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